

“Whose is He?”

Sunday, December 24th, 2017

Fourth Sunday of Advent

 **Matthew 1:19-25**

Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, *“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*

All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”
which means, ***“God is with us.”***

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks, be to God.

[2ND Service: Affirmation of Faith]

[MESSAGE]

We've been looking at the Christmas carol, "*What Child is This?*" throughout the season of Advent.

We've talked about how answering this important question needs to be part of our preparation for Christmas.

It's interesting that the song mentions the specific characters included in the various gospel stories about Jesus' birth.

We sing of the Christ child and his mother Mary.

The angels and shepherds are included.

Though the Magi are not specifically mentioned, their gift-giving has a prominent place.

Even the animals hanging out around the stable are part of the song.

It seems like everyone who makes up a traditional Nativity scene has a part to play in this famous Christmas carol.

The thing is, there is one character conspicuously absent from this musical roll call of characters.

The song never mentions Joseph, the man whose love is so complete that he defies tradition, takes Mary as his wife, and raises her son as his own.

Let us pray: Lord, be with us this morning as we think about Joseph and how he played such an important role in Jesus' life. Help us to understand his perspective and find our own lesson within his story. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

OK, so Mr. Dix forgot to include Joseph when he wrote his song, "*What Child is This?*"

No biggie, right?

But, what about the gospel writers?

Mark doesn't mention Joseph in his gospel either; not once.

Matthew, Luke, and John include him in parts of the story, but nobody gives him a speaking role.

Nowhere in the gospels do we find any words attributed to Joseph; we see only his actions of obedience, care, and presence.

Joseph may not get any air time in the Christmas carol and he may not have anything to say in the gospels, but his role is important and worthy of note.

Joseph is quietly present with Mary before Jesus is born and he is responsible for getting her safely to the spot for his birth.

Joseph is present at the manger that night when shepherds and angels offer their praise.

Joseph remains close by, protecting his family from Herod's threat and making a home for them.

We know he is there at least until Jesus is twelve, recorded in Luke 2:41-52.

After that, we don't know what happens to him, but Joseph is not mentioned again in the Bible.

He is no less important to the story.

The Messiah is to come from the House of David, according to the ancient prophets; Joseph is a direct descendant of David.

Jesus is destined to grow up and live as a human being and Joseph's role as his adoptive father is to guide him toward self-discovery.

The adoptive relationship between Joseph and Jesus gives us insight into our own relationship with God.

Gentiles are adopted into God's "chosen people" through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Just as Joseph adopts Jesus and names him as his own son, Jesus adopts us and names us into our new life as his disciples.

Revelation 2:17 says: *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says: 'I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'"*

That is adoption language that includes the responsibility of the father to name the child.

In our video today, we hear Joseph talk about being uncertain of how his life would be now.

Raising the Son of God as his own son was a tall order and Joseph was rightly a little frightened.

Joseph found a way to make room for Jesus, just as God finds a way to make room for all of us.

Joseph is our model urging us to find room for Jesus in our own life.

We began seeking an answer to the question: “***What Child is this?***”; Joseph began wondering who this child would look like.

As both children of God and of human parents, we may also wonder who we look like where it really matters.

Joseph had no problem answering: “***I think he looks like God.***”

Don't we all hope we also look like Our Father?

We end this series by trying to bring all the pieces together to form a complete answer to the question:
“What Child is this?”

He is shepherd, he is generous giver, he is living water, he is God with us, and

He is the One who came to save *me*.

**In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

[Final Video – “Anthem”]